

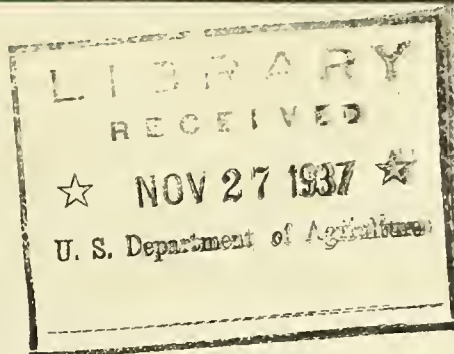
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CONSUMERS' MARKET SERVICE

Issued by Consumers' Counsel Division

Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.



Volume II, No. 1

November 17, 1937

More cranberries and fixings but less turkey than in 1936 are in prospect this Thanksgiving. Whether or not your Thanksgiving dinner will cost more or less than a year ago will depend upon the importance of turkeys and fixings on your holiday menu. Retail prices of turkeys, chickens and other meats probably will be higher than in 1936 but prices of cranberries, potatoes, sweet potatoes, nuts, apples, and most other fixings, are expected to be lower.

Turkey supplies are expected to be one-tenth smaller than last year's record production, but about the same as from 1932 to 1934 and larger than the small 1935 crop. First reports from growers indicated that turkeys would be marketed earlier than usual at heavier weights. Unfavorable weather has slowed up growth of turkeys, but ample supplies are in prospect for Thanksgiving. In mid-November wholesale prices of dressed turkeys at New York were from 3 to 5 cents a pound above last year's relatively low level.

Government turkey grades eliminate guess work in selecting a quality bird. Turkeys are tagged as U. S. Special or Grade AA, U. S. Prime or Grade A, U. S. Choice or Grade B and U. S. Commercial or Grade C. Tags also state whether the turkey is an old or young hen or tom. Grade A usually is the top commercial grade since few grade AA turkeys reach markets. Difference in grade depends primarily on degree of fat over the entire carcass, the flesh covering the breast thighs, and back, and the care used in bleeding and dressing. No bird bruised so as to make any appreciable part of the carcass inedible and no emaciated birds can measure up to U. S. turkey standards. Young birds usually are less than a year old, soft meated with a flexible breast bone. Old birds are more than a year old with toughened flesh and hardened breast bone. Individuals requiring small turkeys will find hens to be the best bargain in ratio of flesh to bone. Toms generally are larger in size, and the bigger the tom the more flesh in proportion to bone.

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Poultry supplies other than turkeys also are expected to be smaller and prices above their 1936 level. Wholesale prices of fresh dressed chickens at New York in mid-November were from 3 to 7 cents a pound higher than a year ago while fowls were up 2 to 5 cents a pound. Sharpest price increases were in lighter weight poultry.

Record size cranberry crop points to a marked reduction in prices from last year's relatively high level. Production is about 50 percent larger than a year ago and considerably above average. In mid-November the wholesale price of cranberries at New York was \$1.50 a 25-lb. barrel lower than a year ago. High quality cranberries are firm, plump, fresh-looking with a high shine. Avoid dull, soft or shrivelled berries. Color and size of berries depend more on variety of the berry than on its quality. The small dark red berries are a bit sweeter than the larger bright red kinds.

Fruit prices are expected to be lower than last Thanksgiving because of larger supplies of apples, grapes, pears and oranges. The grapefruit crop is expected to be smaller than last year's record production, but prices may not be much different from a year ago. Apples most likely will show the sharpest price drop from 1936 among the fruits. The current apple crop is the biggest since 1926 and over 75 percent larger than a year ago.

Lower nut prices will help reduce the cost of the Thanksgiving dinner. Record crops of almonds, walnuts, filberts and above average production of pecans are indicated. Total nut production is 60 percent larger than a year ago and only slightly under the record reached in 1935 when there was a bumper pecan crop. All chestnuts are imported and no data on supplies are available.

More and cheaper potatoes and sweetpotatoes will be available to go with this year's turkey. Production of each of these crops is about a sixth above a year ago and above average. Prices of white potatoes have been close to half their 1936 level.

Butter probably will cost more than at last Thanksgiving but eggs most likely will be cheaper, especially storage and average grade fresh eggs. Butter and egg prices are expected to hit their season's high point this month.

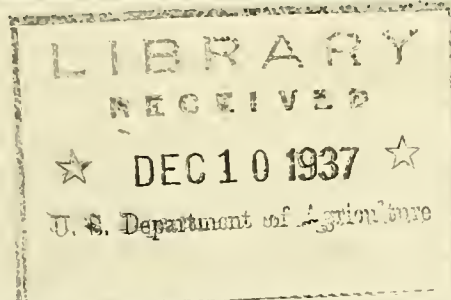
Fresh vegetable supplies for the holiday period probably will not differ much from last year, but more and cheaper canned vegetables are in prospect. Major changes in fresh supplies from a year ago are limited to a sharp reduction in fall string beans and a marked increase in fall carrot production. Supplies of celery are expected to be slightly larger than a year ago. Crispness is a key to celery quality and may be tested by snapping a stalk. Avoid pithy, stringy, and open textured celery with air spaces in the middle.

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Meat, egg, and citrus fruit prices most likely will move down seasonally this month, but seasonal increases in prices of sweet potatoes, onions, apples, cabbage, and potatoes are expected. Price advances, in potatoes, and apples may be less than usual because of large supplies. Some additional increase in butter prices seems likely in early December before the usual downward movement gets under way. Poultry prices ordinarily decline in December, but this year probably will change little or else advance slightly.

Citrus supplies are expected to increase seasonally during December. Tangerine prices ordinarily hit their bottom in December. Low point in orange prices generally comes in January, while grapefruit and lemon prices are lowest in February.

More winter and spring oranges than in 1936, but less tangerines and grapefruit are in prospect. The grapefruit crop is one-sixth below the 1936 bumper crop, but exceeds every other crop. Tangerine production is above average, but likewise is a sixth smaller than last year's record crop. Production of winter and spring varieties of oranges, which are the chief source of supply until May, is the largest on record and one-twelfth above a year ago. This group includes California Navels and all varieties of Florida oranges. Marketings of Florida oranges are heaviest from December through February, while March and April are peak months for California Navels.

Tips for grapefruit buyers. There are two classes of grapefruit, those with seeds and Marsh seedless. Pink fleshed grapefruit differ from other varieties primarily in color. Good quality fruit is firm, yet springy to the touch. Look for well shaped, thin skinned fruit, heavy for its size. Weight indicates juice content and shows whether or not fruit is pithy. Puffy, spongy or course skinned fruits do not have a high juice yield. Blemishes do not affect eating quality. Color is no definite guide to maturity, for the latter depends upon sugar content. Decayed grapefruit, indicated usually by a soft, discolored area on the peel at the stem end, have a flat or bitter taste. Store grapefruit in a dry, cool place.

Fall and winter vegetable prices may be slightly higher than a year ago. Acreage planted to these crops is about 3% less than a year ago, but above average. Freezing temperatures in late November damaged crops in Texas. Production of fall and winter tomatoes, snap beans, spinach, and cauliflower is expected to be less than a year ago, but larger supplies of carrots, celery, green peppers and cucumbers are in prospect.

Tomato supplies from December through February come primarily from Cuba and Mexico. From late February to late May, Florida is the principal source of supply. Tomato prices ordinarily are highest during the winter months and then decline until they reach their low in the summer and early fall. Tomato exports from Cuba this season probably will be less than in 1936-37.

Butter production appears to be close to its low point for the year and seasonal increases in supply are expected in December. Storage supplies have been considerably smaller than a year ago and this factor coupled with production lower than in 1936 has pushed up prices to their highest level since 1930. Sharpest increases have occurred in 92 and 93 score butter, widening the spread between these grades and 90 score butter. While prices during the remainder of 1937 probably will remain above 1936, during the first half of 1938 they most likely will average about the same as in the first half of 1937.

Choice and prime cattle still continue in limited supply, with the bulk of slaughter consisting of short fed cattle - those fed on corn from 60 to 120 days. These cattle generally grade good. Increased slaughter of better grade or long fed cattle is expected after the turn of the year, and a larger than usual decline in prices of choice and prime cattle is in prospect during the first half of 1938.

Most of the autumn decline in hog prices appears to have occurred. Further declines during the winter months probably will be small. Prices of cured products, however, probably will continue moving down since they do not reflect changes in hog prices until several months have passed.

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December 15, 1937.

Christmas turkeys probably will cost a little less than Thanksgiving birds. Chicken and fowl prices also may be slightly below their November level. Last year poultry prices went down sharply from November to December due to heavy marketings. The price decline this year probably will be small in view of smaller supplies and earlier marketing of turkeys.

Fall and winter vegetables in Florida were severely damaged by freezing weather early this month. Most damage occurred in snap beans, green peppers, eggplant and tomatoes. Marketings of these crops from Florida are expected to decline and to continue light for several weeks until the later winter producing areas start shipping. Since Florida is the major source of bean and green pepper supplies in December prices of these items probably will move up temporarily. Tomato prices are not expected to be affected materially by the freeze since most December supplies are imported from Cuba and Mexico.

Retail canned vegetable prices do not appear to have reflected fully the marked reduction in wholesale prices which occurred this fall and winter. Total canned supplies are the largest on record and from 15 to 20% bigger than a year ago. Wholesale prices of standard canned corn, peas, and green beans in November were from 1½ to 2 cents a number 2 size can less than last November. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that U.S. average retail prices of canned corn and green beans on November 16 were only one-half a cent a number 2 can less than a year ago. Retail prices of canned peas were about the same as in November, 1936.

Texas spinach and beets are now starting to move to markets. About one-half of annual commercial production of each of these crops is in this State. Spinach shipments from Texas generally are heavy during the December-March period. Heavy beet shipments, however, extend through May. Beet acreage in Texas is one-quarter larger than last year's average size acreage. Acreage planted to spinach is about one-tenth smaller than the 1937 record.

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Strawberry supplies are expected to be very small until after the turn of the year due to freeze damage in Florida. First strawberries generally come from Florida which is practically the sole source of supply until mid-March. Shipments commence in December but do not become heavy until March. The recent freeze is expected to reduce Florida supplies and to retard marketings. Acreage planted to strawberries in Florida is about average but one-sixth less than a year ago.

Potato, sweetpotato and onion supplies during winter months come primarily from storage holdings of the late crop. Due to relatively large production, potato and sweetpotato prices are expected to make less than their usual rise during the next few months and to remain lower than a year ago. Onion prices most likely will advance seasonally and continue higher than a year ago.

Butter prices appear to have reached their season's peak and a more than usual price decline is in prospect until the yearly low point is reached in June. Substantial price changes are not expected until after the turn of the year. Prices during the early winter probably will be the highest since 1930. However, the average price for the first half of 1938 is not expected to differ much from that in the first half of 1937. Cold storage holdings of butter on December 1 were about one-fourth less than a year ago.

Apple prices probably will advance less than usual until the new crop is available next summer. Supplies during this period come from cold and common storage. Cold storage holdings on December 1 were the largest on record, with most of the increase in eastern apples.

Egg prices are expected to continue moving down until they reach their low point in April or May. Temporary price increases, however, often occur during the winter. Extremely low temperatures not only check production increases but also block deliveries. Recent wide spread between top and average grade egg prices has narrowed considerably but price reduction from a year ago still is most marked in average grade eggs. Supplies of storage eggs are still considerably larger than a year ago, December 1 holdings being over 50% above last year.